

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BUENOS 01098 101631Z  
ACTION ARA-10

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O 101208Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9018

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1098

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, OEXC, AR (BALBIN, RICARDO)  
SUBJECT: CONCERN OF UCR THAT ACTION IN U.S. CONGRESS WILL ABORT  
POSSIBLE LIBERALIZATION PHASE IN ARGENTINA

REF: SMITH-RONDON TELECON OF FEB 9

1. UCR POLITICAL SECRETARY ENRIQUE VANOLI TOLD EMBOFFS THIS WEEK THAT HE AND OTHERS IN UCR FEAR TIMING OF POSSIBLE CONDEMNATION OF GOA BY U.S. CONGRESS MAY SPOIL THE ONE HOPE DEMOCRATIC FORCES HERE HAVE FOR A HAPPY SOLUTION. ACCORDING TO VANOLI, PRESIDENT VIDELA AND GENERAL VIOLA HAVE TOLD UCR LEADER BLABIN THAT ON MARCH 24 THEY WILL ANNOUNCE NEW "PHASE" IN PROCESS. DIALOGUE WOULD BEING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES, NEW EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE TO "MONOPOLIZE POWER" (I.E., BRING SECURITY FORCES UNDER TIGHTER CONTROL AND CURB EXCESSES), MARTINEZ DE HOZ WOULD BE DROPPED FROM CABINET AND ECONOMIC PROGRAM MORE ATTUNED TO "SOCIAL DANGERS" ADOPTED, AND EVENTUALLY, AS ATMOSPHERE IMPROVED SUFFICIENTLY, SOME REPS OF POLITICAL PARTIES MIGHT BE BROUGHT INTO GOVERNMENT.

2. VANOLI WAS NOT OVERLY OPTIMISTIC THAT VIDELA AND VIOLA COULD OVERCOME OPPOSITION OF SOME GENERALS AND ACTUALLY PUT NEW PHSE IN OPERATION OR, EVEN IF THEY DID, THAT THEY COULD MAKE IT WORK. HE SAW IT, HOWEVER, AS "ONLY CHANCE WE HAVE." IF THIS FAILED, HE BELIEVED VIDELA WOULD FALL, UCR AND OTHER  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BUENOS 01098 101631Z

PARTIES AS WELL AS LABOR WOULD GO INTO OPEN OPPOSITION AND "FAT WOULD BE IN THE FIRE."

3. VAONLI HAD HEARD THAT FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE MAY RESUME HEARINGS SOON AND HE FEARED THAT CONDEMNATION WHICH MIGHT RESULT WOULD UNDERMINE VIDELA GOVERNMENT BEFORE IT HAD A CHANCE TO ARTICULATE AND MOVE INTO NEW PHASE. HENCE, HE IS

CONSIDERING IDEA OF TRAVELING TO U. S. IN ORDER TO TALK INFORMALLY WITH FRASER AND OTHER CONGRESSMEN AND PLEAD FOR A LITTLE MORE TIME. VANOLI EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS THINKING ONLY IN TERMS OF FEW MORE MONTHS. "IF GOVERNMENT HAS NOT MADE NECESSARY RECTIFICATIONS BY THEN INCLUDING THE CURBING OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS," HE CONCLUDED, "WE AND ALL OTHER DEMOCRATIC FORCES WILL BE IN FULL OPPOSITION; THEN AND NOT NOW WOULD BE TIME FOR YOUR CONGRESS TO ACT."

4. EMBASSY SHARES VANOLI'S SKEPTICISM. EVEN IF VIDELA AND VILA ARE IN EARNEST CONCERNING NEW PHASE, IT MAY NEVER SEE LIGHT OF DAY. THERE WILL DOUBTLESS BE OPPOSITION WITHIN ARMED FORCES. ADMIRAL MASSERA, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD PROBABLY HAVE NO OBJECTIONS IN SUBSTANCE, BUT WOULD OPPOSE ANY SUCH INITIATIVE IF ONLY BECAUSE IT AUTHORED BY VIDELA AND VIOLA. FURTHER, SOME ASPECTS OF PROGRAM SUCH AS DUMPING MARTINEZ DE HOZ (WHICH MAY BE SIMPLY WISHFUL THINKING ON PART OF UCR), NOT NECESSARILY HELPFUL.

5. EVEN SO, IF UCR AND OTHER DEMOCRATIC FORCES HERE WISH TO EXPLAIN THEIR POSITION AND PLEAD FOR MORE TIME TO CONGRESS, WE BELIEVE THEY SHOULD HAVE THAT OPPORTUNITY. WE CANNOT DO IT FOR THEM SINCE MESSAGE'S CREDIBILITY WITH CONGRESS WOULD THUS BE DIMINISHED. IT STRIKES US THAT MORE EFFECTIVE SPOKESMAN FOR DEMOCRATIC PARTIES EVEN THAN VANOLI WOULD BE RICARDO BALBIN HIMSELF. HE HAS UNSULLIED DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS, IS BEST KNOWN OF THE POLITICIANS STILL ON THE LANDSCAPE, AND COULD SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY. ACCORDINGLY, EMBASSY REQUESTS ON URGENT BASIS THAT DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZE FUNDS FOR AN EXTRA  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BUENOS 01098 101631Z

LEADER GRANT FOR ARGENTINA. WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY WITH BALBIN OR WITH VANOLI AND WOULD NOT WISH TO DO SO UNTIL WE HAD ASSURANCES THAT WE COULD ISSUE INVITATION TO BALBIN. TO HAVE ANY IMPACT, OF COURSE, WE ASSUME HE WOULD HAVE TO ARRIVE IN U. S. ON OR ABOUT MARCH 1 IF INDEED NOT EARLIER. HIS INVITATION WOULD THEREFORE HAVE TO BE PROCESSED ON CRASH BASIS. DEPARTMENT DOUBTLESS HAS ENOUGH BIO ON BALBIN TO INITIATE ACTION ON INVITATION. WE RELATIVELY CERTAIN HE WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR TRAVEL AND LEADER GRANT FOR HIM IS SOUND IDEA ON ITS OWN MERITS SINCE HE HAS NEVER BEEN TO U. S. IT COULD BE THAT HE WOULD PREFER NOT TO GO AT THIS TIME, BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO BE IN A POSITION TO EXTEND INVITATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WITH IDEA THAT HE WOULD HAVE OPPORUNITY TO TALK TO CONGRESSMEN DURING FIRST WEEK OF HIS VISIT AND THEN GO ON TO REGULAR LEADER GRANT SCHEDULE IN OTHER CITIES. PLEASE ADVISE SOONEST.  
HILL

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